

**JOINT STAFF REPORT
WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 1
Columbia River Compact
December 18, 2000**

<i>Purpose:</i> To review sturgeon and smelt stock status and consider non-Indian fishing options.

TAC

- The Fact Sheet was distributed to the TAC on December 15, 2000.
- Copies of the Joint Staff report concerning sturgeon and smelt were provided to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review prior to being mailed on December 1, 2000.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Salmon

- There is no Management Agreement for upriver spring chinook, summer chinook, and sockeye in place at this time.
- All proposed fisheries are included in an ESA Section 7/10 Application that was submitted to the NMFS on November 3, 2000 and impacts on listed ESU's by proposed sturgeon and smelt fisheries are expected to be *de minimus*.

Sturgeon

- 2001 will be the fifth consecutive year in which Columbia River sturgeon fishery management is guided by a Joint State Accord.
- The Oregon and Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissions readopted most of the major tenets of the past Olympia Accord (1997-1999) for the 3-year period of 2000-2002.

<i>Major Tenets of 2000-2002 Sturgeon Fishery Management</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Commercial target seasons allowed, as necessary, to access allocation and maximize economic benefit consistent with conservation objectives for other species.✓ Green sturgeon-only commercial seasons are not allowed; however, green sturgeon may be taken concurrently during other commercial seasons provided the green sturgeon catch does not exceed levels observed in past fisheries.✓ Commercial size limits are 48-60 inches for white sturgeon and 48-66 inches for green sturgeon.✓ Sport fishery regulations include; size limits of 42-60 inches for white sturgeon and green sturgeon, one sturgeon per day and ten sturgeon per year catch limits, and barbless hooks required.

- Sturgeon fisheries are managed on optimum sustained yield approach which results in an annual harvestable number of 50,000 white sturgeon for 2000-2002.
- Harvestable number is to be allocated 80% (40,000 fish) sport and 20% (10,000 fish) commercial.

Smelt

- WDFW and ODFW are in the process of developing a Joint State Smelt Management Plan for adoption by the Washington and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commissions.
- A public meeting was held on October 27, 2000 to gather input concerning this plan and input concerning sport and commercial fishing seasons was also received at this meeting.
- The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted policy statements from the Joint State Smelt Management Plan at the meeting held on December 8, 2000.
- The Draft Management Plan provides for three levels of fishing based on 1) parental run strength, 2) juvenile production, and 3) estimates of ocean productivity.

<i>Recommended Fisheries Contained in Draft Joint State Smelt Management Plan</i>	
✓	Fishery recommendations apply to January - March timeframe, otherwise permanent regulations remain in effect.
<u>Level One</u>	
✓	Expectation of poor run or great uncertainty concerning expected abundance.
✓	Commercial fisheries limited to 12-24 hours for Columbia and Cowlitz rivers.
✓	Tributary sport fisheries would also consist of 12-24 hours per week.
<u>Level Two</u>	
✓	Promising abundance but there is uncertainty about whether run is moderate or strong.
✓	Commercial fisheries would consist of two or three day fisheries in the Columbia River and increased tributary opportunity with maximum flexibility in fishery structure.
✓	Tributary sport fisheries could be increased to two or three days per week.
<u>Level Three</u>	
✓	Very positive indicators of strong abundance and productivity.
✓	Commercial fisheries would consist of four days per week in the Columbia River with additional opportunity in the Cowlitz River.
✓	Tributary sport fisheries would be opened four days per week.

WHITE STURGEON STOCK STATUS AND FISHERIES

White Sturgeon Stock Status

- The lower Columbia River white sturgeon population is healthy.
- Indicators for sublegal (<42 inches) and oversize (>60 inches) populations are very good.
- Abundance estimate for 1999 is not complete at this time but should be available soon.
- During 2000 catches totaled 50,600 white sturgeon (10,600 commercial, 40,000 sport) and 840 green sturgeon.

<i>Estimated Abundance of Harvestable White Surgeon in the Lower Columbia River, 1989-1998.</i>			
Year	Total Length Interval (inches)		
	42-48	48-60	42-60
1989	32,500	16,800	49,300
1990	26,100	12,000	38,100
1991	32,900	11,700	44,600
1992	59,900	8,700	68,600
1993	85,000	14,200	99,200
1994	N/A	N/A	N/A
1995	143,200	59,000	202,200
1996	131,700	33,500	165,200
1997	123,700	33,400	157,100
1998	161,600	24,700	186,300

Winter Commercial Fishery

- The 2000 fishery began with ten 30-hour target sturgeon fishing periods occurring between January 11, 2000 and February 11, 2000.
- The 2000 fishery was extended for six salmon/sturgeon fishing periods (24-48 hours) occurring between February 13, 2000 and February 29, 2000.
- A total of 2,283 white sturgeon and 495 spring chinook (365 Willamette, 2 CKL, and 9 upriver) were landed during 2000 winter fisheries.
- An estimated 53% (1,215 fish) of the white sturgeon and 3% (17 fish) of the spring chinook landed during the winter season were caught during target sturgeon fishing period.
- The fishery structure was well accepted by the commercial industry and conducive to a good marketing situation.

2001 Commercial Winter Season Recommendation

Mon Jan 8 Noon	-	Tue Jan 9 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Jan 11 Noon	-	Fri Jan 12 6PM	(30 hrs)
Mon Jan 15 Noon	-	Tue Jan 16 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Jan 18 Noon	-	Fri Jan 19 6PM	(30 hrs)
Mon Jan 22 Noon	-	Tue Jan 23 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Jan 25 Noon	-	Fri Jan 26 6PM	(30 hrs)
Mon Jan 29 Noon	-	Tue Jan 30 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Feb 1 Noon	-	Fri Feb 2 6PM	(30 hrs)
Mon Feb 5 Noon	-	Tue Feb 6 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Feb 8 Noon	-	Fri Feb 9 6PM	(30 hrs)

Area: Zones 1 - 5.

Gear: 9" minimum and 9-3/4" maximum mesh size restrictions.

Allowable Sales: Sales of salmon and sturgeon allowed.

Sanctuaries: Grays River, Elokomina-A, Abernathy Creek, Gnat Creek, Cowlitz River, Kalama-A, Lewis-A, Washougal River, and Sandy River sanctuaries are in place.

Expected Catch: 1,500 - 2,500 white sturgeon
 ≤ 50 spring chinook (100% Willamette, 4 wild upper Willamette)
 7 winter steelhead

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
J		Noon _____	6 PM		Noon _____	6 PM	
A	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N		Noon _____	6 PM		Noon _____	6 PM	
U	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
A		Noon _____	6 PM		Noon _____	6 PM	
R	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Y		Noon _____	6 PM				
	28	29	30	31			
F					Noon _____	6 PM	
E					1	2	3

B		Noon	6 PM		Noon	6 PM	
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- Staff will monitor weekly landings and season adjustments will be considered at future Compact hearings as needed.
- Salmon target seasons typically begin sometime after mid-February.

<i>RATIONALE</i>	
✓	Fishery is designed to maximize economics while minimizing handle of chinook and steelhead.
✓	Winter season structure initially developed in 1997 with input from commercial fishing industry representatives.
✓	Season structure similar to successful seasons in place during 1997-2000.
✓	Season allows access to portion of commercial white sturgeon catch guideline.

Sport Sturgeon Fishery

- Expected catch for 2000 may exceed catch guideline of 40,000 white sturgeon.

- Modifications to the currently adopted 2001 fishing season are needed to remain within catch guidelines.

- Public meetings were held with constituents who represent a cross-section of the sturgeon angling public on November 20, 2000 and December 7, 2000 in an attempt to reach consensus concerning modification of the current season.

<i>Current 2001 Season</i>	
Area:	Columbia River below Bonneville Dam
Dates:	January 1-December 31, 2001
Catch Limits:	1 sturgeon per day and 10 sturgeon per year
Size Limits:	42-60" for both white and green sturgeon
Expected Catch:	Up to 44,000 white sturgeon 100 green sturgeon

- Based on the results of these meetings and the need to manage for the 40,000 catch guideline, the Joint Staff has the following recommendations for the mainstem Columbia River sport fishery in 2001.

<i>2001 Sport Sturgeon Fishery Recommendation</i>
Prohibit retention of sturgeon in the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam during August 16 - September 15. Catch and release angling may continue. Fishery managed for 40,000 white sturgeon catch.

- Retention restriction is expected to reduce catch by 3,500 white sturgeon and effort by 12,500 angler trips.
- The fishery will be monitored inseason and if necessary retention restriction will be: 1) extended through September 30, 2) reduced to shorter duration, or 3) eliminated altogether.
- Joint Staff recommends that current regulations not be modified after September 30 in fairness to upriver anglers.

- If the 40,000 white sturgeon catch guideline is exceeded in 2001 then the 2002 catch guideline will be reduced accordingly.

<i>RATIONALE</i>	
✓	Regulations are expected to maintain catch within 40,000 catch guideline.
✓	Other fishing opportunities will likely be available when retention restriction is in place.
✓	Regulations are understandable, enforceable, and apply to the entire Columbia River below Bonneville Dam.
✓	Regulations are flexible and allow for inseason adjustments as needed.
✓	Regulations are supported by industry representatives attending December 7, 2000 meeting.

SMELT STOCK STATUS AND FISHERIES

Stock Status

- Population estimates are not available, but relative annual abundance may be indexed using commercial landings data.
- Adult production in Columbia River tributaries, as indexed by commercial landings data, were poor for 1994-1999.
- Commercial landings data combined with sport fishery data suggest that the return in 2000 was the largest since 1993.
- Spawning success in 2000, as indexed by larval sampling, was good in the mainstem Columbia River and several tributaries, including the Cowlitz River.
- 1997 and 1998 parent broods for this year's return was small.
- Improving ocean conditions may benefit smelt returns in 2001.

1999-2000 Commercial Fishery

- The standard 7 days per week season occurred from December 1, 1999 - December 28, 1999.
- A test fishery, consisting of one 12-hour period (7AM-7PM every Wednesday) per week, was initially adopted for eight weeks during December 29, 1999 through February 16, 2000.
- Based on improved CPUE in the commercial fishery and excellent sport catches the fishery was extended for an additional 12-hour fishing period (7AM-7PM Wednesday) on February 23, 2000.
- Commercial landings totaled 30,400 pounds from the Columbia River. The Cowlitz River was closed to commercial fishing in 2000.

2000-2001 Columbia River Commercial Fishery

- Scheduled to be open seven days per week effective December 1, 2000 through March 31, 2001 as per permanent regulations.
- Landings to date have been small to non-existent with few fishers participating.
- Water temperatures are warm for this time of year. Temperature at Bonneville Dam was 48° on December 11, 2000.

- The Columbia River is very clear with a visibility of 7 feet measured at Bonneville Dam on December 11, 2000.
- Based on input from the October 27, 2000 public meeting, an additional meeting was held on November 28, 2000 with interested commercial fishers to gather input concerning upcoming commercial smelt fisheries.
- Based on results of the November 28, 2000 meeting and guidelines included in the Draft Joint State Management Plan the Joint Staff developed the following season recommendation.

<i>2000-2001 Mainstem Columbia Commercial Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	Close ongoing 7-day per week fishery effective Monday January 1, 2001 and adopt a Level 1 fishery consisting of 18-hour weekly fishing periods during January 1, 2001 through March 31, 2001.
Open Day:	Wednesday
Hours:	3 AM to 9 PM
Gear:	Gill net, dip nets, or trawls as per permanent regulations.
Participants:	Columbia River commercial fishers with appropriate licenses and legal gear.

- Effort is expected to remain similar to 2000 level.
- Fishery will be closely monitored inseason and modified as needed through emergency or scheduled Compact hearings.

<i>RATIONALE</i>	
✓	Continues very conservative management strategy adopted beginning in 1997 to protect broodstock escapement.
✓	Proposed season is consistent with draft Joint State Smelt Management Plan.
✓	Provides opportunity to collect abundance index data that is comparable to past years and collect biological data such as age composition, sex ratios, and average size.
✓	Extension through March allows for improved data collected to estimate annual abundance.
✓	Expected impact rate is <10% of the run entering the Columbia River.
✓	The proposed fishery is supported by commercial fishers attending a public meeting held on November 28, 2000.

2000-2001 Washington Tributary Fisheries

- WDFW adopted permanent regulations that closed all Washington Columbia River tributaries to both commercial and sport smelt fishing in May of 1999.
- WDFW will announce their intentions regarding sport and commercial smelt fishing regulations for all Washington tributaries.

TREATY INDIAN FISHERIES

- Under permanent Compact rules, a treaty Indian commercial setline season occurs noon January 1, 2001 - noon January 31, 2001.
- The Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) will meet in January to review stock assessment updates and management options including harvest guidelines, and to make recommendations for subsequent Zone 6 sturgeon management in 2001.
- The report from the SMTF will be presented at the January 25, 2001 Compact Hearing.
- The current size limits for sturgeon caught for tribal subsistence and commercial purposes are 4-5 feet.

NEXT COMPACT HEARING

- The next Compact hearing is scheduled for January 25, 2001 at 10 am at the ODFW Headquarters Commission room in Portland, Oregon to update salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, smelt, and shad stock status, consider fishing options in the mainstem Columbia River, and consider miscellaneous regulations for Columbia River commercial fisheries.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 15, 2000